

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2168

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 4593

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: SENATOR AQUINO

1. SUMMARY: SENATOR AQUINO'S SISTER CALLED ON AMBASSADOR APRIL 12 TO REQUEST HE CONVEY HER LETTER TO PRESIDENT FORD ASKING FOR EXPRESSION OF CONCERN OVER SENATOR'S PLIGHT. AMBASSADOR AGREED TO PASS ON LETTER. SHE EXPRESSED HOPE FOREIGN PRESS AND U.S. GOVERNMENT WOULD CAUSE MARCOS TO FREE BROTHER WHEREAS AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED MORE PRODUCTIVE APPROACH WOULD PROBABLY LIE IN ATTEMPT TO DETERMINE CONDITIONS FOR RELEASE AND EXILE. AQUINO CONTINUES TO FAST, WELL BUT WEAK, APPARENTLY CONVINCED HIS CAMPAIGN IS BUILDING PRESSURE ON MARCOS. HE IS EXPECTED TO REVEAL CONDITIONS APRIL 14 FOR ENDING FAST BUT IF MARCOS' PAST PERFORMANCE ANY GUIDE AQUINO TACTIC NOT LIKELY PROSPER. END SUMMARY

2. MRS. LUPITA AQUINO-CONCIO, SENATOR AQUINO'S SISTER, CALLED ON AMBASSADOR APRIL 12 TO ASK HIM TO TRANSMIT LETTER FROM HER TO PRESIDENT FORD. LETTER BEING POUCHED APPEALS TO PRESIDENT QUOTE AND SEEKS EXPRESSED CONCERN TO HELP MY BROTHER IN HIS NINTH DAY OF HUNGER STRIKE END QUOTE. AMBASSADOR AGREED TO PASS ON LETTER.

3. IN ENSUING CONVERSATION, AMBASSADOR SAID QUESTION WASHINGTON WOULD ASK WAS WHAT SHE HOPED TO ACHIEVE BY LETTER. SHE SAID SHE HOPED THAT COMBINATION OF FOREIGN PRESS AND U.S. GOVERNMENT PRESSURE WOULD CAUSE PRESIDENT MARCOS TO RELEASE AQUINO. AMBASSADOR SAID SUCH PRESSURES COULD BE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE SINCE MARCOS DID NOT RESPOND WELL TO PRESSURE. HE RELATED FACT HE HAD DISCUSSED WITH
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PRESIDENT POSSIBILITY OF AQUINO EXILE IN U.S. AND THAT PRESIDENT HAD INDICATED CONCURRENCE IN CONCEPT OF EXILE SUBJECT TO AQUINO'S

REQUEST FOR PARDON FOR CRIMES FOR WHICH HE CHARGED. WHEN MRS. CONCIO DEMURRED, AMBASSADOR EMPHASIZED THAT IT WAS UP TO FAMILY TO DETERMINE MOST LIKELY CONDITIONS OF RELEASE IN BEST WAY THEY COULD.

4. SHE SAID SENATOR HAD FORBADE FAMILY TO NEGOTIATE FOR HIM AND HAD PERSUADED THEM THAT FAST TO DEATH WAS QUOTE BEAUTIFUL END QUOTE ACT OF PRINCIPLE IN BATTLE OF WILLS NOW TAKING PLACE. AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT AFTER 30 MONTHS' INCARCERATION THE SENATOR WAS NOT LIKELY BE MOST OBJECTIVE JUDGE OF WHAT WAS RIGHT FOR HIM, HIS FAMILY OR HIS FOLLOWERS. MOREOVER GOP WOULD PROBABLY NOT LET HIM STARVE TO DEATH IN ANNY EVENT.

5. EMBASSY TOLD BY SENATOR MITRA APRIL 11 THAT DIOKNO AND TANADA ENCOURAGING AQUINO IN FAST WHEREAS SALONGA ARGUING AGAINST. MITRA SAID HE IS PERSUADED THAT AQUINO REALLY DOES INTEND TO FAST TO DEATH AS WAY OF SCORING AGAINST MARCOS, AND FAMILY AND FRIENDS EVIDENTLY SHARE SAME ASSESSMENT.

6. AQUINO NOW HAS LOST 17-18 POUNDS, IS WEAK BUT MENTALLY LUCID, TALKATIVE, AND ARGUMENTATIVE. HE IS TAKING WATER AND AMINO ACIDS, ACCORDING TO SISTER, AND FAMILY TRYING TO PERSUADE HIM TO TAKE SALT. GOVERNMENT IS KEEPING CLOSE MEDICAL CHECK ON HIM. FAMILY AND ATTORNEYS STILL HAVE ACCESS TO HIM.

7. COMMENT: EMBASSY NOW INCLINED ACCEPT PROPOSITION THAT AQUINO SINCERE IN HIS SUICIDAL CAMPAIGN, THAT IT IS HIS OWN DECISION MADE AGAINST THE FAMILY'S WISHES AND THAT IT IS AIDED AND ABETTED BY SOME OF HIS ADVISORS AND FOLLOWERS FOR POLITICAL INTERESTS. AQUINO'S DETERMINATION BEING BOUYED IRONICALLY BY FAMILY WHO TELL HIM OF ENTHUSIZSTIC ATTENDANCE BY PEOPLE THEY THOUGHT HAD FORSAKEN AQUINO AT PRAYER MASSES. ENCOURAGED BY QUOTE SUCCES END QUOTE OF CAMPAIGN, AQUINO WILL, WE UNDERSTAND, LAY DOWN CONDITIONS FOR ENDING FAST ON APRIL 14.

8. WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE SUCH PRESSURES NOT LIKELY SWAY PRESIDENT. GIVEN ANTAGONISM THAT EXISTS BETWEEN TWO RIVALS, RELEASE WILL REQUIRE EFFORT FROM AQUINO SIDE TO ACCOMMODATE RATHER THAN BROWBEAT MARCOS.

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